Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

The Supreme Court has banned mining in the Aravalli Hills to stop degradation of the forest cover and to maintain ecological balance. However, the stone mining was still prevalent in the border district of the affected State with connivance of certain corrupt forest officials and politicians. Young and dynamic SP who was recently posted in the affected district promised to himself to stop this menace. In one of his surprise checks with his team, he found loaded truck with stone trying to escape the mining area. He tried to stop the truck but the truck driver overrun the police officer, killing him on the spot and thereafter managed to flee. Police filed FIR but no breakthrough was achieved in the case for almost three months. Ashok who was the Investigative Journalist working with leading TV channel, suo moto started investigating the case. Within one month, Ashok got breakthrough by interacting with local people, stone mining mafia and government officials. He prepared his investigative story and presented to the CMD of the TV channel. He exposed in his investigative report the complete nexus of stone mafia working with blessing of corrupt police and civil officials and politicians. The politician who was involved in the mafia was no one else but local MLA who was considered to be very close to the Chief Minister. After going through the investigative report, the CMD advised Ashok to drop the idea of making the story public through electronic media. He informed that the

local MLA was not only the relative of the owner of the TV channel but also had unofficially 20 percent share in the channel. The CMD further informed Ashok that his further promotion and hike in pay will be taken care of in addition the soft loan of 10 lakhs which he has taken from the TV channel for his son's chronic disease will be suitably adjusted if he hands over the investigative report to him.

(a) What are the options available with Ashok to cope up with the situation?

(b) Critically evaluate/examine each of the options identified by Ashok.

(c) What are the ethical dilemmas being faced by Ashok?

(d) Which of the options, do you think, would be the most appropriate for Ashok to adopt and why?

(e) In the above scenario, what type of training would you suggest for police officers posted to such districts where stone mining illegal activities are rampant?

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MARKS	WORD LIMIT
20	~250 words

Answer Hint

(a) Options Available: Publish the story through the channel, comply with the CMD’s instructions, seek independent editorial review, verify and strengthen evidence, or approach a credible alternative

media platform or lawful authority.

(b) Critical Evaluation: Suppression protects employment and financial security but shields corruption. Immediate publication promotes accountability but may risk defamation claims if evidence is insufficient. Independent verification and lawful disclosure balance public interest with professional responsibility.

(c) Ethical Dilemmas: Truth versus job security; public interest versus corporate loyalty; journalistic independence versus ownership pressure; personal financial obligations versus professional integrity; environmental protection versus vested interests.

(d) Best Option: Independently verify the evidence, seek legal and editorial advice, protect confidential sources, and pursue responsible publication through a credible channel. Preserve evidence and report credible criminal allegations to competent authorities.

(e) Police Training: Environmental laws, mining regulations, intelligence-led policing, anti-corruption ethics, investigation of organised crime, digital and forensic evidence, inter-agency coordination, personal safety, and protection from political pressure.

Model Answer

Introduction

Ashok faces a conflict between journalistic integrity and personal security. His investigation exposes an alleged nexus between the mining mafia, public officials, and a politician, while the channel's management is attempting to suppress the findings for private interests.

(a) Options Available to Ashok

Ashok may comply with the CMD's instructions, publish the story immediately, seek independent verification and legal review, approach a credible alternative media organisation, or submit evidence of criminal conduct to competent investigative authorities.

(b) Critical Evaluation of Options

Suppress the Story: This may protect his job, promotion, and medical finances, but would undermine journalistic ethics and allow corruption and

environmental destruction to continue.

Publish Immediately: This could expose wrongdoing and honour the public's right to know. However, publication without adequate verification may invite defamation proceedings and endanger sources.

Seek Independent Review: Additional fact-checking, legal scrutiny, and editorial consultation would improve accuracy and credibility, though management may continue to obstruct publication.

Approach Alternative Platforms or Authorities: Responsible disclosure through a credible independent outlet or competent authority may preserve the investigation's public value, provided evidence and source confidentiality are protected.

(c) Ethical Dilemmas

Ashok faces truth versus personal financial security, public interest versus loyalty to his employer, professional independence versus corporate pressure, and accountability versus fear of retaliation. His son's medical needs intensify the dilemma but do not eliminate his ethical responsibility.

(d) Most Appropriate Option

Ashok should not surrender or suppress verified evidence for personal benefits. He should preserve the original material securely, verify every allegation, seek legal advice, protect sources, and pursue publication through an independent and credible platform if his channel refuses fair consideration. Evidence of criminal conduct should also be shared through lawful channels. He must avoid sensationalism and provide a fair opportunity to respond to those accused.

(e) Training for Police Officers

Police personnel in mining-affected districts should receive specialised training in environmental and mining laws, organised-crime investigation, forensic evidence, intelligence gathering, and inter-agency coordination. Ethics, anti-corruption practices, resistance to political interference, witness protection, and operational safety should be integral components. Independent oversight and secure reporting mechanisms can help officers resist pressure from influential offenders.

Conclusion

Ashok should uphold truth and public interest through evidence-based, legally responsible journalism. Institutional safeguards and specialised police training are essential to dismantle illegal mining networks and protect both the environment and public servants.